

Weatherization Savings Take Root in New Mexico

New Mexico's official tree, the pinyon, produces a wide range of products. Pinyon nuts are consumed for food, the plant fibers are used to make baskets and other items, the pitch is used as an adhesive, and the wood is burned for fuel. This diverse commodity is highly valued for its numerous benefits. New Mexico also values the Weatherization Assistance Program (Weatherization) for its diverse benefits. Weatherization reduces energy costs for low-income households by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes, while ensuring their health and safety. Weatherization measures produce energy, economic, and environmental benefits for low-income individuals and communities.

TENDING A GROWING NEED

Low-income households typically spend 14% of their total annual income on energy, compared with 3.5% for other households. This burden becomes more pronounced when energy prices soar. Low-income families often cut back on other necessities to pay their energy bills. Weatherization reduces home energy consumption, which provides a permanent boost to the household's budget.

New Mexico's Weatherization Program prioritizes services to the elderly, people with disabilities, and families with children. These low-income households are often on fixed incomes or rely on income assistance programs and are most vulnerable to volatile changes in energy markets. Weatherization measures provide long-term relief for low-income families and protect them from future fluctuations in energy prices and supplies.

New Mexico's Mortgage Finance Authority partners with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to administer the Weatherization Program and a network of three local agencies delivers energy efficiency services to every county in the state. Weatherization crews and contractors use computerized energy audits and advanced diagnostic equipment, such as a blower door, to determine the most cost-effective measures

NATIONAL WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM

Homes weatherized in 1999	68,000
DOE allocations in 1999	\$135 million
Average annual energy cost savings per household	\$300
Average space heating savings	25-30%
Energy benefits returned for every \$1 invested	\$2.10
Jobs supported	7,000

NEW MEXICO

Homes weatherized in 1999 (with DOE \$)	353
DOE funding in 1999	\$1 million
Clients served in 1999	1,054
Elderly	17%
People with disabilities	14%
Families with children	23%

appropriate for each home. New Mexico crews also test heating units and appliances for carbon monoxide and gas leaks. Typical weatherization services include installing insulation in ceilings, walls, and floors; sealing ducts; and mitigating heat loss through windows, doors, and other infiltration points.

New Mexico leverages core DOE dollars with allocations from the State General Fund and the Public Service Company of New Mexico. Agencies use leveraged resources to weatherize more homes and deliver expanded services to low-income households.

RAISING SPIRITS

Weatherization technicians provide comprehensive energy efficiency solutions for low-income families. They often provide a needed lift to dampened spirits as well. El Paisano provided extensive weatherization work for Charles Estevez*, a senior citizen from Albuquerque. Charles appreciated the notable increase in comfort and also for the worker who stayed late to repair his radio. Charles relies mainly on his 16-year old dog for company and was happy to have music for the holidays.

Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico assisted a disabled couple from Carlsbad. The agency identified and sealed numerous points of air infiltration and installed a carbon monoxide detector and several smoke detectors. The couple wrote a letter of thanks to the agency saying, "The crew was very kind and honest and they did a very good job in fixing our house. They are very hard workers...we need people like you in this world, especially low-income people like us."

Before weatherization, Jesse Wilson* relied on a small propane heater in his living room to ward off winter's chill. He would close off the rest of the house and huddle under a blanket near the heater. When the weatherization crew from Open Hands arrived on a sunny day, it was warmer outside the home than inside. Since Jesse rents the house, Open Hands contacted the owner to approve the necessary work and to contribute to the cost. The crew then installed insulation throughout the home and replaced the hazardous, unvented space heater with a double wall furnace. Jesse now lives in a safe, warm home.

BEARING FRUIT

Weatherization creates important and immediate economic benefits for low-income families. The measures installed also provide a long-term buffer against future energy price increases. Weatherization creates benefits for the entire community by keeping money in the community that would typically be exported out to pay for energy. This spurs local economic growth and creates additional jobs. Every \$1 retained in the community produces an estimated \$3 in multiplier benefits.

Reducing residential energy demand decreases electricity generation and avoids emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and other pollutants. This improves local air quality and reduces adverse health effects, particularly asthma. Weatherization measures also mitigate residential and power plant emissions of greenhouse gases. Weatherization reduces annual carbon dioxide emissions by an average of one

metric ton per weatherized home or one-third the emissions of an average automobile.

WEATHERIZATION WORKS!

Weatherization produces an impressive range of energy, economic, and environmental benefits for low-income households and communities. Nationally, for every \$1 invested in the program, Weatherization returns \$2.10 in energy-related benefits. Weatherization measures reduce national energy consumption and curb demand for imported oil. Weatherization works for New Mexico and America!

**Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the subjects.*



New Mexico crews use the blower door to identify and mitigate air infiltration.



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, CONTACT:

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Visit the Weatherization Web site at: www.eren.doe.gov/buildings/weatherization_assistance
or call the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Clearinghouse at: 1-800-DOE-3732



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